UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

MAY 26 2011

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: *Environmental Assessment on the Effects of the Issuance of a Scientific Research Permit (File No. 15677) to Conduct Scientific Research on Shortnose Sturgeon in South Carolina Rivers.*

LOCATION: Netting would take place within all major South Carolina river basins to the first impassible dam.

SUMMARY: The current EA analyzed the effects of shortnose sturgeon research on the environment within South Carolina river basins. Specifically, the Savannah, ACE Basin, including the Ashepoo, Combabee and Edisto Rivers, Cooper, and Santee Rivers, Lake Marion and its tributaries, and the Winyah Bay system, including the Black, Waccamaw, Sampit, Little Pee Dee and Great Pee Dee Rivers, would be surveyed with gill nets and trawls to the first impassible dam. If authorized, the applicant would also assess shortnose sturgeon usage of the upper Santee River Basin (Wateree, Saluda, and Congaree Rivers) as part of two Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing projects: the Duke Energy Catawba Wateree and the SCANA Services Saluda Hydroelectric Projects

The proposed action analyzed in the EA would not have significant environmental effects on the target or non-target species; public health and safety would not affected; no unique geographic area would be affected; and the effects of this study would not be highly uncertain, nor would they involve unique or unknown risks. Issuance of this permit would not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor would it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. There would not be individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts associated with the proposed action, and there would not be adverse effects on historic resources. The permit would contain mitigating measures to avoid unnecessary stress to the subject animals.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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The environmental review process led us to conclude this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) including the supporting EA is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/FONSI, we will consider any comments submitted assisting us to prepare future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Doremus, Ph.D.
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure